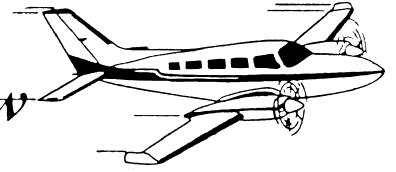




Arizona Airman *Aviation Safety Review*



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Useful Airspace Information Around the Phoenix Class B.

As much as we may be uncomfortable with change, it's a way of life and happens all around us. The greater Phoenix Valley airspace is no exception to this rule either. With this said, the Scottsdale FSDO is publishing a word from Luke Air Force Base in hopes that it will reduce Mid-air Collisions between Military aircraft and civil aviation in the Northwest Valley of Phoenix.

"Hot Spots" Concerning Luke AFB, AZ By: Lt. Col. Jim Harkins, Luke AFB

For those of you that haven't noticed, Luke Air Force Base has changed its calm wind runway from 03 to 21. This happened a few years ago due to encroachment. Because of this, we've created new airspace "hot spots" to the North of Luke. The main problem is the section of airspace between Luke and the Pleasant Valley airport. Most pilots, who transit this area to the East or West, fly either along Grand Ave, or around the North side of Sun City while avoiding traffic at Pleasant Valley airport to the South.

Potential conflicts exist because the majority of Luke's F-16 landing patterns go through "Aux 3" (now also known as the Surprise Sports Complex) at an altitude between 2600 and 3500' MSL. From there aircraft turn to parallel Grand Ave, swing around Dysart High School, then turn to Luke at 2600' MSL. F-16 pilots have been told to try and stay south of Grand Ave to avoid civilian pilots following Grand Ave. Most civilian pilots stay North of Grand, which is great. However (you knew that was coming), many F-16s also recover around Sun City West to the Power Station on the NNE side of Sun City. These F-16s are also at 3500' MSL, with some descending to 3100' MSL en route to the Power Station. Once again, the F-16s will descend to between 2600 and 3100' MSL when they cross Grand Ave on the Luke centerline. We have had several near misses with aircraft following Grand Ave at these altitudes.

But wait...there's more! A handful of F-16s (more if the weather is marginal or bad) recover with Luke Approach to fly an instrument approach. These jets are usually at 7000' MSL, just inside the White Tank Mountains, until the West side of Sun City, then begin a slow descent to approximately 3600' MSL approaching the Power Station. Depending on traffic congestion, these F-16s could be as far North as Pleasant Valley Airport before being turned back toward Luke. Again,

numerous conflicts with traffic transiting east and West between Grand Ave and Pleasant Valley at the noted altitudes.

So what can we do to avoid an unpleasant meeting over the skies of Sun City? First of all, please talk to Luke Approach on 120.5! They can only separate traffic that is squawking and talking to them! If, for some reason, you can't talk to Luke, there are two preferred choices:

1. Talk to Luke Approach on 120.5!
2. If North of Sun City, between Luke's centerline and the White Tank Mountains, stay above 7500' MSL (Class B permitting) or below 2000' MSL (Safety and FARs permitting) when transiting East or West.
3. When following Grand Ave, between Aux 3 (Surprise Sports Complex) and Luke's runway centerline, stay above 4000' MSL or below 2000' MSL.

The good news is that Luke flies no patterns to the East of the Runway centerline. The bad news (for those that follow Grand Ave) is that up to 4 jets can be flying instrument approaches at Aux 1 airfield. The radar pattern downwind, for this unusable airfield, is just to the north of Grand Ave between 3,000 and 5,000' MSL. So, if you are following Grand Ave between Wickenburg and Surprise (i.e., in the Alert Area), you should be talking to Luke Approach on 120.5 so that they can de-conflict you and the radar pattern traffic. If you can't talk to anyone, avoid the block of 3,000 to 5,000' MSL while following Grand Ave West of the White Tank Mountains.

I hope this sheds some light on the hornet's nest we call Luke Air Force Base. Bottom line: Talk to Luke Approach on 120.5 when transiting North of Luke and/or working in the Alert Area. This will provide maximum situational awareness to both the civilian and military pilots. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact Lt Col Jim Harkins at (623) 856-6942, or email me at james.harkins@luke.af.mil. In the meantime, let's share the skies safely!